FADE OUT

Another Pug Fairchild Story

By Mildred Cram.

Illustrated by F. C. Yohn.

PUG, CATCHING THE RIFLE, TURNED IT UPON THE ASTOUNDED NATIONALISTS, WHO WERE BETWEEN THIS SURPRISE AND THE EDGE OF ETERNAL SPACE.

RITA was pretty. She had no other excuse for her amazing lack of what our grandmothers call "good common sense." She lived a life that would have destroyed a strong man of the Victorian era. She never went to bed before two, and she rose invariably at six to ride in Central Park. After breakfast she walked up and down 5th avenue, nosing in and out of shops and galleries, with the inquisitive, alert, shivery manner of a young pointer. She always lunched in the noisiest restaurant she could find. In the afternoon she danced or skated, getting home in time to dress hurriedly for a dinner party, where she danced again.

She was pretty, but she had no heart. She was far too pretty and too busy to think about her heart, and, as a result, wasn't bothered by falling in love or by the disturbing subtleties of the game of sentimental hide-and-seek. She was as cool and as impersonal as a dryad—a twentith-century dryad frisking in and out of marble lobbies, scented tea rooms, theaters and skating rinks. Somewhere in the back of her mind was the thought: "If I stop, I shall realize how absurd I am. I'm afraid to stop."

So she went on, running a race and not with happiness, but with amusement. And amusement wore the face of a satyr, while happiness stayed out of sight like an elusive and desirable faun. Whenever Rita felt the pangs of discontent she fancied that she was bored, and bought a new hat or a fur coat to assuage the pain.

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RITA had a father, and her father, being the director of a railway, a millionaire, and fifty-five years old, was also no fool. For a long time he had watched Rita frisking among the potted palm forests of Manhattan—at first with humor, because she was so young to be so wise; like a kitten sharpening its claws—then with pity, and finally with genuine alarm. He realized that he saw her only at breakfast. Now and then he glimpsed her from the windows of the University Club—a fashionable young person wrapped in furs to the tip of her piquant nose, her head held high, her eyes reflecting the prismatic brilliance of 5th avenue.

On those occasions Mr. Blanchard sighed. He wanted Rita to be happy, and, reasoning backward to his youth, marriage signified happiness. It distressed Mr. Blanchard to watch Rita revolving like a squirrel in a cage. Other girls married. But what in thunder could he do? It is no longer the custom to push reluctant maidens into matrimony.

Once he said to her: "Rita, isn't it about time you settled down?"

"Settled down?"

"Isn't there some young man . . .?" Rita's eyes opened wide. "You silly old dear," she said, "don't be romantic."

"I want you to be happy."

She got up from the table, kissed the top of his head, and laughed. "I'm perfectly happy. Why on earth should I fall in love- It's so uncomfortable—always worrying about how you look, and whether he'll be pleased, and having to toe the sentimental mark. Honor and obey! No. I'm happier as I am!"

Mr. Blanchard knew better. No woman in the world is happy who has not looked life in the face, and Rita was dodging the issue. The music of the world was drowned out by the throbbing tom-tom of the jazz. And Mr. Blanchard put in some serious half hours wondering about right and wrong. This gilded squirrel cage couldn't be reality; foxtrotting couldn't be the ultimate aim of existence. Rita had slipped away from him while he bargained in the market place. Dissipated? So was he, then! Drunk on directorships. . . .

Mr. Blanchard's office was on the twenty-fifth story of a building near Bowling Green. From the windows he could see the harbor, that gateway to adventurous dreams. Ships came in from southern seas. Ships sailed out again, bound for the four quarters of a delectable globe. The men who sailed in them knew other horizons than the pinnacles and towers of New York.

"Perhaps," Mr. Blanchard thought, looking out of his office window at the complicated activity of the harbor—"perhaps if I take Rita away, she will acquire a prospective. She has had her nose pressed on the Manhattan plate-glass pane——"

He reached for the telephone and called Hanover six million. Two blocks away, slung aloft in another gilt and marble skyscraper, a bell jangled sharply. And presently Mr. Blanchard was grinning into the mouthpiece of the telephone and opening his heart to the senior partner of the Fairchild Company.

"This you, Fairchild? Blanchard. I am in trouble and need your help. Not financial—human. It's Rita. She isn't happy. Nothing I can put my finger on, you understand—she makes all the motions, but she doesn't deceive me. If I hadn't been a business debauchee, I would have seen it long ago. She seems to think that the day is lost in which she has not danced six hours in a badly ventilated room full of idlers and cigarette smoke. She pretends to like it, but I know better. Rita is at heart as sound and as fresh as she ever was. Only she has acquired some astounding notions. Romance is out of date, along with fidelity, devotion, idealism, and other mid-Victorian virtues. If Rita's mother were alive, Rita would not be disdainful of the homely moralities. I have allowed her to listen too long to the piping of the saxophone."

Mr. Fairchild chuckled. "New York's to blame," he said. "This city is strong meat for the young. You've got to be a fool or a worlding to keep your balance."

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MR. FAIRCHILD'S time being worth about fifteen hundred dollars a minute, he said, abruptly to the point. "Why don't you take Rita away?"

"Egypt — Italy—Jamaica——" murmured Rita's father in a sepulchral voice.

"Nonsense! Take her to Tahiti or British Guiana or the Belgian Kongo. The most uncomfortable place you can think of. I know a better dose than any of those—Magella. Try Magella! It's hot and dusty and as unfashionable as a Gilbert and Sullivan operatta. There's only one hotel in the place—fifty cents a day tout compris—you know what that means! There you will encounter primitive morality unadorned—no jazz, unless it be the nasal caterwauling of some amorous Latin singing 'O Sole Mio'—to the moon! Go! Stay a year. Rita will turn romantic in self-defense. She will probably marry a Magellan aristocrat who is descended from some Neapolitan fishmonger—and live happily ever after. It is on your own head."

"Are you serious?"

Mr. Fairchild, a block away, nodded violently into the unseeing, black rubber mouthpiece. "I know nothing of daughters. But, remember, I have a son who took his Manhattan diploma three years ago. I sent him to Magella and he has learned many things—principally that a large slice of the world lies beyond Brooklyn to the north, Jersey City to the south, Fort Hancock to the east and Van Cortlandt to the west! Pug has a wholesome respect for men who have never set foot in the Knickerbocker and who have never heard of Florenz Ziegfeld. When he comes back he may even underestimate us a trifle."

"Rita won't go," Mr. Blanchard interrupted.

"Then kidnap her. A steamer sails for Rio tomorrow morning. You can catch a company boat there—the Rough Rider. She's a tub, I warn you. If you want an excuse—why not represent me at the official opening of the railway? Take a frock coat and a top hat. There'll be some sort of a service—flags, speeches, compliments. Entente cordiale. The government is slipping, and we are hanging on to our property literally by our teeth. It's up to you."

Mr. Blanchard had a vision of himself—millionaire and railway celebrity—dictating the policy of a one-track road in a sun-baked South American republic. Inwardly he groaned. But because he was thinking of Rita's lackluster heart, he said briefly: "Thanks. I'll go."

That night he dined at home. Rita was not there, and the servant explained that she was dining with the Fairbankses and later "going on" to the Chu Chin Chow. Mr. Blanchard groaned and retreated to the library, where he sat him down to wait. He had two tickets for passage aboard a fruit steamer sailing in the morning for Rio; he took them out of his pocket and smoothed them on his knee, and smoked three large black cigars in slow succession. The servants went to bed. Outside in the fashionable East Side street there was an occasional silvery clink of passing motors and the rarer clop of a carriage. The little brass clock on the library table kicked frivolously on toward midnight, passed 1, 2, 3. Mr. Blanchard's head wobbled on his shoulders, but he keut himself awake. And at 4 the front door opened, closed softly, and Rita came in.

She was dressed in a glorified coolie's costume—hydrangea-blue pantaloons, purple coat, orange cap set jauntily on her braided hair. She stood in the doorway, blinking sleepily.

"Sitting up? Father, what on earth has happened?"

"It occurred to me," Mr. Blanchard said, "that you and I were seeing too little of each other. Today some one asked me whether your eyes were blue or brown—and I had forgotten. Come here."

Rita crossed the room and sat on the arm of his chair. "I have gray eyes," she said.

"That's so. Gray. And what do you see with them, my dear?"

"You sound like the wolf in 'Little Red Riding Hood.' I see you. And you're getting bald on the top of your dear old head."

"I'm getting old."

"Nonsense." Rita kissed him and spied the tickets—as he had intended that she should. "What have you got there?"

"Tickets. New York to Rio."

"Who's going?"

"You and I."

There was a short silence, when it seemed to Mr. Blanchard that he could hear the beating of his heart, loud and clamorous as the kicking of the frivolous clock. Rita was motionless, with her cheek against her father's hair.

"Nonsense!" she said, after a moment. "I can't go anywhere! You've no idea how busy I am."

He spoke dryly: "You seem to be—very busy." He put the tickets in his pocket and stood up.

"I'm sorry, Rita."

"What are you doing in Rio?"

"I'm not going there. Farther—to Magella. You remember Pug Fairchild?"

"Yes."

"He has finished his railway and I am going down to open it. A job likely to be flavored with the paprika of adventure."

"Why?"

"They are going to have a revolution down there—bandits versus the self-respecting element."

Rita slid to her feet and stretched her pretty arms over her head. "Aren't you afraid to take me?"

"Aren't you afraid to go?"

She laughted. "No!"

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MR. BLANCHARD turned away to hide the triumph in his eyes. He knew if she had said "Nonsense!" again he would have lost his temper; he might even have slapped her—and the thought appalled him. After all, she owed him something. She spent his money with reckless prodigality and gave nothing in return for it. Mr. Blanchard was no fool; he knew that behind every parasite there is a bank account—he had been to blame. Ten thousand a year for ball gowns! Five thousand for horses and motors! Heaven knew what else she expected. No wonder her smile was as listless as cigarette smoke.

He felt her hand on his shoulders. "I'm crazy to go," she whispered. "Magella—anywhere! I've played on all the instruments; I've pulled all the strings. I'm bored!"

He put his arm around her, and they clung together, crying a little because they really loved each other. In her heart she was thinking: "Poor old dear. He needs a rest." He thought: "Rita needs a perspective." And both of them were wrong, of course.

But they caught the fruit steamer and sailed away with her out of the crowded, brilliant harbor down a sea that deepened as they traveled southward, into unimaginable blue; gulls hovered astern; dolphins turned somersaults and played pinwheel; the sun rose in a glory and sank as with the metallic clamor of a brass band—a shattering of gilded fragments on the rim of the world.

Rita had brought six trunks, two hatboxes, golf sticks and her own saddle. Miniature republics were as far from her ken as they are from yours and mine. For all she knew, Magella was something like the first act of "Florodora"—palms, show girls, spotlights, comedians and syncopated melody. She expected to see Al Jolson um-pahing on the beach with a chorus of blond cannibals one-stepping in the bosky shadow of artificial cocoanut trees. She pictured herself flirting with naval officers in spotless duck. There would be a moon every night, of course. And some one with a guitar . . .

Rita possessed a heart, but she would have said "Nonsense!" had you dared to tell her so. She had always been proud of her aloofness—she could turn her emotions on and off with the ease of a bell boy wielding an icewater spigot. She boasted of being able to say to any man, under any circumstances: "I will not love you." And she never had. It is difficult to propose to a girl who is making it perfectly clear that you are, mentally, physically and spiritually, invisible.

Mr. Blanchard watched her with amazement and pity as the big fruit steamer cut swiftly southward across a tranquil sea. She was as hard and bright as platinum—and equally precious. Civilization had given her the polished surface, the patina of all luxurious, expensive things. Mr. Blanchard thought with a sort of panic that she probably had faith in the perfect docility of the elements; she would patronize a typhoon and face, without flinching, a tidal wave. All her life she had commanded people and things. As she paced the fruit steamer's deck, with her hands in the pockets of her smart tweed coat, she had the air of saying "Nothing can happen to this ship, because I am on board." And it terrified Mr. Blanchard, who was responsible. He knew what lies in ambush for those who put their nose in the air and keep it there. Life has a way of placing invisible things across the path; such snares as love and poverty, failure and desire. And Rita was too pretty, too confoundedly pretty.

"Well, my dear," he said, leaning on the rail by Rita's side, and squinting at the dazzling sky, "we're almost there! Tomorrow Rio, then a short trip on the company boat, and then—Magella. Does your heart skip a beat when you think of palms and white sand and sombreros and revolutions?"

She glanced at him and shrugged her shoulders. "It takes more than that to make my heart skip a beat," she said.

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AT Rio—not Rio de Janeiro, by the way, but a reeking hot coast town farther north—they transferred themselves and Rita's bulging trunks to the Rough Rider, and for a number of days were bumped, rolled, pitched and kicked down a steaming sea toward Magella. The Rough Rider was dirty. She was top heavy. Her narrow decks were exposed to the withering attentions of an ardent sun that popped out of the ocean before night was decently finished, and stayed in the heavens until the stars came out. There was no shade anywhere during those burning, intolerable days. Rita lay in her stuffy cabin and fanned herself and thought of New York—New York wrapped in snow! Mr. Blanchard sat in his shirt sleeves in the meager shelter of the deckhouse. Once, when Rita ventured on deck for a breath of air, she saw him playing cards with three dark gentlemen in greasy ponchos. Her father!

The Fairchild mines lay behind the city of Magella in the cindery heart of the Santa Christian mountains, American capital had flung a railway across the range, in the campagna on the other side, northward to the Concordian frontier. And American capital, pouring into the national treasury via old man Fairchild and Bowling Green, New York, had not only brought Magella before the eyes of the world, but had paved the way for spectacular future. Old man Fairchild's son, armed with Yankee faith in the invincibility of right, had not only succeeded in building the railway, but had kept the opposing political parties from flying at one another's throats. The royalists, strongly propped and reinforced by American dollars, favored the Fairchild company. The nationalists, opposed by nature to law and order, bit around the edges of the peaceful administration, looking for an easy way in.

Administering Magella was like seeing to the moral and physical welfare of Babeldom. There were perhaps a dozen pure-blooded Magellans in the city—men who claimed to be descended from Spaniards who came to the little white city with the dawn of the new world, bringing jewel-incrusted crucifixes, saddles made of silver, coins of the reign of Phillip, and hope beyond the dreams of man. This handful of aristocrats had grown gray with honors. They lived in grilled houses facing the Plazza Indepenenza or the fashionable Esplanade.

For the rest, Magella was biracial and bilingual. A Spanish-Italian motley trod the narrow streets, barefooted and wearing for shelter from the scorching sun enormous straw hats with conical crowns. The railway had brought about a social mince pie—racial flotsam from the four corners of the globe drifted into the city in the wake of industry—Chinese, Germans, negroes from Louisiana and Alabama, Englishmen, Japanese. The nationalists recruited malcontents from this volatile element, prodded them with anti-American tirades, threw the gold dust of the Christians into their eyes, and formed an army.

The royalist forces were very well drilled; when marching in holiday parades they flashed and glittered and meneuvered with all the spectacular elegance of West Point cadets on review. But old man Fairchild's son—popularly called Signor Pug—knew that a pretty uniform doesn't make a soldier.

"When the clash comes," he said to Diego, president of the republic, "your tin warriors will fall on their faces and yammer. It is the way of comic-opera armies."

The clash came and Diego's warriors were four days' march from the capital. It fell to a handful of citizens to face the attacking nationalists in the streets of Magella. And Mr. Blanchard, sent by Fairchild pere to open the Magella railway with dignity and ostentation, was on his way, blissfully unaware that the baby republic had burst into howls. Mr. Blanchard had been brought up in a country wher law and order were as much a matter of course as the regular intaking and outgoing of one's breath. He spoke blithely to Rita of "revolutions," being under the impression that they might witness a fight between street urchins and policemen.

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THE crew of the Rough Rider, however, suffered from no such colorful illusions. No wireless communications were received from the station at Porto Bio, which in itself was enough to cause the captain to wring his hands. He called Porto Bio as long as the Rough Rider remained within calling distance, but the station, for the first time in five years, failed to greet the ex-privateer as she staggered down the coast from Rio.

The following morning a pile of rosy hued cumuli thrust above the horizon, and the captain, peering anxiously from the bridge, pointed with a blunt forefinger: "Magella."

Mr. Blanchard looked, felt his heart leap with a strange new excitement, and ran below to Rita's cabin. She was lying on her back in the narrow berth, her arms clasped under her head, her eyes closed. She wasn't interested in Magella. Bitterly she said so.

"Magella? You dragged me down here because I was bored! The cure is worse than the disease. I'm seasick. I'm uncomfortable. I'd give my right hand to be back in the land of bathtubs and ice water. If this is romance, give me reality!"

That afternoon the rosy hued clouds drew nearer, heightened, took on fantastic and incredible mountain shapes, developed substance, color, reality. Rita, standing in the narrow bow of the Rough Rider, saw the city of Magella come into focus—first a blur of white, then opaque squares against a background of tropic green, then distinguishable houses—the twin campanili of the cathedral, the dome of the Teatro Nazionale, the vast, semi-circular wall of the Arena Goldoni.

When the Rough Rider slipped around the Capo headland and entered the harbor it became evident that all was not well in Magella.

The sound of rifle fire was distinctly audible—sharp and dry as a stick drawn along a picket fence. Now and again a puff of white smoke blossomed in the hills, and those on board the Rough Rider heard the dull explosion of big guns. A coast steamer had gone ashore at the harbor's mouth and lay on her side, half out of water, like a stranded whale. And as the Rough Rider passed, a crackle of rifles broke out on the steamer's deck.

Rita become aware of a faint singing above her head. She heard some one shouting: "Out of the way! They are firing at us!"

"Incredible," she thought, and stayed where she was. Looking toward the city, she saw men stagger, crumple and fall. She saw the whole side of a house collapse and become a floating cloud of yellow dust.

"So this is Magella!" she panted. "Are they staging a fight for our benefit, or is it real?"

Mr. Blanchard groaned. "Real." He pointed. "Look! Some one's coming out in a launch."

Rita looked. Her cheeks were flaming, her eyes brilliant. And her heart, her lackadaisical heart, skipped every other beat. She saw a launch put off from shore and head straight for the drifting Rough Rider. An American flag rattled at the stern, and Rita saw a man standing upright in the bow, a target for every rifle along the Esplanade. He waved, and as the launch came alongside Rita caught sight of his face.

"Pug Fairchild!"

He came up the Rough Rider's side ladder, haggard, splattered with the mud of Magella and the blood of Magellans, barefooted, bareheaded and laughing. The crew of the Rough Rider plucked him off the side ladder and hurled questions.

"It's all over," he shouted, "Finito! The revolution has happened and has failed. We drove the main forces out two hours ago. Cammarillo is dead. I saw him die. President Diego and Miss Diego are at the consulate. McCarthy is holding the mines. And the royalist comic opera forces are now engaged in cleaning up the water-front streets." He stretched, grinned happily and ran his hands over his dust-begrimed face. "Por Dios, senores, a wonderful fight! Where is Mr. Blanchard? We had a wire ten days ago——"

Mr. Blanchard rose from his squatting position behind the deckhouse and came forward with gingerly caution. Rita was behind him.

"Hello, Pug," she said.

Pug Fairchild shouted. He caught Rita's hands. He danced an ecstatic fox trot up and down the Rough Rider's narrow deck. He shook Mr. Blanchard's right hand and then, for good measure, his left. He held Rita off at arm's length and scanned her with enthusiasm and gratitude.

"Rita! An American girl in the middle of a tupenny-ha-penny revolution! You're a sight for tired eyes."

Rita's glance was cool. Her heart was beating at its usual rate—which was just a little steadier than a Waltham watch. She was pretty, and knew it. Revolution or no revolution, here was just another young man whose eyes kindled at the sight of her. Strange that she could think of him thus, considering their last meeting in New York. But to her he was then just a lovable boy. Though the whole world rocked with hate and triumph, she remained true to her role.

"Is there a decent hotel in Magella?" she demanded.

"No," Pug said shortly. "But I dare say we can make you comfortable."

And his smile died like the sun going behind a cloud.

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THEY went ashore in the launch, Rita refusing to stay another night on board the Rough Rider. Mr. Blanchard followed meekly, with scared looks over his shoulder at the stranded coast stteamer, from whose deck a constant popping of firearms sounded like explosions of corn in some gigantic popper.

A man was fussing over the engine in the launch, a thin, dark man in soiled linen. Pug introduced him to the Blanchards as "my friend, Carlo Gonelli, who fought for the freedom of Magella." Rita bowed and Gonelli, clicking his heels together, bent from the waist.

"What a monkey!" Rita thought.

"What a beauty!" Gonelli thought.

They continued to stare at each other all the way across the harbor. Gonelli's black eyes flashed sidewise, impudent and admiring. His coat was ripped up the back; his collar had wilted in the heat of some terrific fight in the narrow streets of the city; his curly hair stood on end. Rita saw that there was blood on the back of his hands. A deep cut, as if some one had slashed at him with a sword. Yet he busied himself with the engine. . . . Was he a Magellan? An Italian?

She looked away from him and watched the city.

No one was visible beneath the double row of clipped trees along the Esplanade. There were no lights in the shuttered houses. Silence.

"Signor Pug," Gonelli said suddenly, "we are victorious! Viva Magella!"

"Are you sure," Mr. Blanchard asked in an unsteady voice, "that it is quite safe to go ashore?"

"There isn't a nationalist in the city," Pug assured him. "If you like, I'll take you to the consulate."

The launch slid smoothly toward the wharves and jetties of the company's property at the extreme northern end of the Esplanade. Darkness, complete and baffling, shut down on the city. Gonelli cut off the engine and the little craft drifted into the shadows through a narrow way between fishing boats and small freighters lying at anchor. A distraught barking of dogs broke out on shore. A man's voice shrieked once: "Liberta!" Then all was still again.

The launch grated against an invisible jetty. Rita could see nothing save the bulky outlines of sheds and storehouses. But Pug got a foothold on the slippery landing steps and gave his arm to father and daughter. They stumbled up to the wharf level. Gonelli close behind.

"I don't like this," Mr. Blanchard said sharply. "If anything should happen to us——"

There is no explaining the complicated activities of destiny. It just happened that the bouyant Signor Pug, flushed with victory, groggy with fatigue, and blinded by the sudden darkness, had brought Magella's distinguished guest ashore at the wrong place. Destiny, not satisfied that the show was over, staged an anticlimax before, metaphorically speaking, flying home to roost.

Ten of Cammarillo's nationalists had eluded the mounted royalists in the dusty melee on the Esplanade, and, taking advantage of the thickening twilight, had hidden themselves in a tangle of freight on the company's wharves. None of these men had any idea that Cammarillo was dead. He had fallen in the Via della Pace, not a hundred yards from the American consulate.

When they heard Mr. Blanchard's voice, coming out of the darkness like a fretful echo, they wriggled forward on hands and knees, obeying the inaudible command of the dead leader, jumped up swiftly and, with a single, noiseless, expert motion, surrounded the three men and the girl.

Pug and Gonelli had no idea who was who in the silent scuffle which took place in the smothering blackness of that unfamiliar place. It was all black—sky, earth, sea—and to have fired into the pressing bodies about them would have been to chance killing Blanchard of the Great Trunk or that pretty girl with the steady heart. She screamed once. Mr. Blanchard, feeling the cold nose of a long-barreled Winchester pressed against his neck, said distinctly: "Outrageous!" and became silent, as if seized with an immense discretion.

They were pushed back into the launch, and, secure in the baffling shadows, the ten nationalists tumbled aboard after their prisoners. Rita fell on her knees. She got up and, groping in the darkness, cried: "Father, where are you?"

"Here," Mr. Blanchard groaned, trying desperately to bite the invisible nationalist who was sitting on his chest.

"Quiet!" some one commanded in Spanish. "Who of you understands the engine?"

Gonelli answered: "I do."

"Then take us out into the harbor and go north until we tell you to stop. If you speak above a whisper you will have no need to speak again."

"Bene," Gonelli said briefly.

A match flared. Rita saw a crowd of lean, dark men in wide-brimmed hats. Their eyes glittered out of the dark like the eyes of wolves. Four of them sat on the protesting body of old man Fairchild's son.

"Name of God!" one cried in a solemn voice. "It is Signor Pug himself!"

"At your service," Pug remarked.

Rita looked from him toward the man who had "fought for Magella's freedom." He was bending over the engine. As if the deep cut on his hands were not enough, the nationalists had wounded him again during the brief scuffle on the wharf; there was blood on his cheek, and his natty bow tie had worked itself into a ribald position at the back of his neck.

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THE light flickered out, and the launch, tipping dizzily beneath the unaccustomed weight, moved out into the harbor. Scarcely a hundred yards away the shore moved by, a shapeless density of houses and vegetation. Nothing stirred there. There was not a light, not a sound to show that this was a city for which men had just fought and died.

This was Magella, little land of big desires. This was the place of papier-mache palms which Rita had imagined. Only now it reached out to her in that breath of scented air, and she felt its reality, its glamour, its romance. Presently, lulled by the rustle of water and the throb of the engine, she fell asleep leaning against the broad back of a very dirty nationalist who was spending the night pressing the nose of his rifle into her father's ribs. She dreamed of a rose-colored boudoir, of snowy pillows and scented tubs, of crystal and lace and silver—of New York . . .

She woke to a luminous dawn. The launch lay in shallow water beyond a white beach fringed with cocoanut palms. Pug and her father were wading ashore, knee-deep in the surf. Gonelli was wrapping his wounded hands about with strips of cloth torn from his tattered shirt. He met Rita's eyes and smiled.

"Good morning, signorina," he said. Rita thought: "He isn't such a monkey, after all."

One of the nationalists offered to carry her ashore, but she pushed him aside and waded in with Gonelli, the small, crested waves breaking to her waist.

"What is going to happen to us?" she demanded.

"God knows, signorina. These men look upon Signor Pug as their hereditary enemy. He is the personification of the hated Yank, the spirit of progress, the symbol of political sanity. They will kill him if they can. They will kill me because I am his friend. You they will hold for ransom, somewhere in the hills."

"Things like this don't happen."

"They happen in Magella, signorina."

"Why don't you do something?"

Gonelli stared down at her with a look of amused admiration. "Why not? Why not, indeed?" He glanced over his shoulder at the picturesque ragamuffin who was prodding him forward with gentle insinuations and pressures. "Signorina," he said in a low voice, "you are the prettiest girl I have ever seen. I expect to die very shortly—ten minutes or ten hours; it is all one! Dying men should have certain privileges. Forgive me, signorina, if I tell you that I loved you when I saw you. I am a Neapolitan by birth, a Magellan by choice. We Magellans live for the fun of living. We fight for the joy of fighting. We love for the glory of loving. We die when there is no longer honor in living. I will fight to live, to love you, and to win you. Ebbene?"

"I don't know what ebbene means," Rita said, "but I grasp the plot."

And, be it frankly said, she smiled into Gonelli's eyes.

They were met on the beach by the ten nationalists. The ten had, by some obscure political sum in arithmetic, become twenty. And there were horses tethered in the meager shadow of the cocoanut palms.

Pug smiled at Rita. "They are taking us to Cammarillo's hacienda," he said. "Try to look pleased."

"I always ride before breakfast," Rita laughed.

The way led across a narrow plateau, a place of palms and fruit trees, of deep torrents rushing between lush banks to the sea, of dense vegetation, brilliant flowers and sudden open stretches drenched with sun. The twenty nationalists divided themselves and guarded their prisoners with enthusiasm.

Gonelli rode at Rita's side. He talked to her of life, of sunshine, of youth and the precious certainty of love. He told her of Magella—the great mountains and the plains. He spoke to her, with gentle insistence, of herself.

"You are an American. Yet you speak to me in the language of my people—with your eyes. You are beautiful. You have been in my dreams always—you have come with your long brown hair spread over your shoulders, with whispers that were just for me. You are straight and flexible and swaying as the stem of a young bamboo. You have stirred my heart."

"In New York," Rita said, "no one says things like that unless there is a calcium moon and slow music."

"In Magella," Gonelli answered, "we say things like that when we love."

"You love easily."

"We are not subject to mean hesitations and fears."

At noon they halted in the very shadow of the Christinas at the mouth of a narrow gorge through which some estuary of the Marias river poured into the plain. A fire was lighted and the hungry prisoners were given coffee and bread. Afterward they mounted again and splashed through the gorge to the river bed beyond—that fabulous floor of pink sand at the base of the Christinas.

* * * *

THAT night the nationalists made camp two thousand feet above the river in a scooped-out pocket sheltered from the wind. Mr. Blanchard groaned like a wounded man when they lifted him from his horse, and, moved by pain and fury, to reckless speech, he shouted: "Outrageous! Horrible! Wait until the United States Senate hears about this! They'll send down an army and a fleet and blow this damned little country out of the sea!"

Whereupon Mr. Blanchard was prodded with the butt end of a rifle and told in colorful Spanish to hold his tongue. He was also told, but lost the gist of the telling, that he was the eleventh son of a degenerate pig, a despised Yank, an enemy of the people, and a bad coin. To be called a bad coin in Magella is to taste the dregs of insult. This knowledge, at least, Mr. Blanchard was spared. He gulped a cup of coffee, groaned, and stretched himself full length on the ground, too exhausted to care whether he was false currency or not. Rita looked at him and smiled a twisted little smle. Blanchard of the Great Trunk!

"Pug," she said, "haven't we had about enough of this?"

Pug lifted his haggard face from a tinful of the enemy's coffee. "Sooner or later," he said quietly, "I'll start something."

Presently the two men lay down side by side, surrounded by a ring of nationalists, who slept, wrapped in their gaudy ponchos on that side of the pocket which faced the canon and the trail. Two remained awake. One of these men sat on a rock directly in front of Rita. She stared at his ponderous shadow silhouetted against a sky full of blazing stars. He wore a wide-brimmed hat with a chocolate-cream crown, and a rifle lay across his knees. The other watcher sat at the head of the trail. Now and then Rita caught sight of the glow of his cigarette—a tiny crimson spot in an immensity of darkness. Farther up the slope the horses stamped and cropped at the sparse grass of these high places. A thin, high harmony of snores rose from the sleeping nationalists.

Rita did not sleep. She was aware that Pug and Gonelli, for all their courage, were quite helpless. They lay between the armed guard and the fringe of snoring banditti. She alone could do—what might be done. If, for instance, her honorable goat tugged at the leash. . . . If twenty-two years of having her own way had not destroyed in her the essential qualities of her race—fortitude, daring, and the ability to act quickly. If she dared—

She lay still, with closed eyes, pretending sleep. Then, by imperceptible inches, what seemed to be hours of effort, she managed to get behind that immovable nationalist. He paid no attention to her. At his feet a feeble blaze licked at a handful of sticks. His hands grasped his rifle. He was as silent, as ponderous as a stone idol.

"I can't do it," Rita thought, shivering.

She glanced at Pug. He lay on his side, facing her. And she saw that his eyes were not closed; beneath his lids he gazed fixedly at the wakeful nationalist. Gonelli was actually asleep. The Neapolitan, he who had fought for the liberty of Magella, had flung his arms over his head in an attitude of despair. Rita watched his face—ardent, spirited, scornful—and knew at last that she possessed a heart. She felt it beating, riotous and delicious; an unfamiliar chaos that astounded her. She had no idea who this man was, beyond the fact that he had found her beautiful and had dared to tell her so. He touched her imagination. With frightened leap of her heart she thought: "I am going to love him in spite of myself! A Magellan. A tattered, curly-haired nobody! Romance. Oh, glory!"

IT had grown suddenly cold, and the wind, sweeping down from the fantastic peaks of the Christinas, howled mournfully as it passed over the rim of the canyon. The stars flickered out; the watchful nationalist kicked the embers of the little fire and huddled in his poncho. The man who guarded the trail—was erased by the shadows; there was no longer even the glow of his cigarette.

"I'll dare," Rita thought. "I'll try."

The nationalist, with a grunt, lifted his hands from the rifle and felt in his pockets for the making of a cigarette.

"Now," Rita said aloud.

She snatched the rifle, threw it down between Pug and Gonelli, and with a single, violent shove pushed the nationalist forward into the fire.

Madness followed. The guard at the head of the trail woke from a troubled sleep and with a howl fired in the wrong direction. The other lay in the embers and prayed. Pug, catching the rifle, turned it expertly upon the astounded nationalists, who were between this surprise and the edge of eternal space. They groaned and lifted their hands heavenward, while Gonelli, flying through the darkness like the disembodied spirit of revenge, came into violent contact with the guardian of the trail, and not only deprived him of his gun, but of every ounce of breath in his body. They fell, clasped in each other's arms, and rolled down the stony path. Presently Gonelli came back, a crestfallen bandit stumbling before him.

All of these things happened simultaneously. For an instant the world was full of oaths, thumps, groans and excitement. Then Signor Pug kicked one of the enemy out of the fire and made oration to the others:

"Hombres, you have been outwitted by a woman. You call yourselves soldiers! The liberator is dead. There is no room in the country for enemies of peace and prosperity. Por Dios, senores, you will be the joke of Magella! Now, come here—one by one—and give me your artillery. So, and so. Buena! Benissimo! Damn fine! Now head on down the trail and keep walking until I tell you to stop. Gonelli, will you and Mr. Blanchard bring that string of horses? I'm hurrying on. I've got a best girl in Magella. And I'm hankering for a shave. We'll go straight up the river bed and through the Indian trail. Soldati! Avanti!"

The disgruntled nationalists disappeared into the blackness of the canyon with a faint rattle or spurs and the clatter of small pebbles that bounced before them down the trail. Mr. Blanchard, suddenly galvanized into violent action, started after the horses.

Gonelli and Rita had disappeared. Somewhere in that smothering darkness they stood heart to heart. Gonelli was saying "Your heart beats in tune to mine, amore."

And Rita whispered, "I've heard the music of the world at last."

When dawn came she was riding by Gonelli's side. Before them Signor Pug sat upon a brisk pony and drove the twenty nationalists toward Magella.

Gonelli leaned over and caught Rita's hand. He pointed, and in the deepening glow of that amazing light she saw the trail that led toward the future and reality.

"Fade out," she said, and smiled into Gonelli's eyes.

Mr. Blanchard was bringing up the rear. He looked, rubbed his fingers across his unshaven chin, grinned, and thought "Happy at last. Amen."

(Copyright, 1921.)

"WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO US?" SHE DEMANDED.

"THE TRIP WILL BE FLAVORED WITH PAPRIKA," BLANCHARD ADMITTED. "AREN'T YOU AFRAID TO GO?"

THEIR HUMAN SIDE

BY WILL P. KENNEDY.

All the thrills of living on the outlands of civilization with savagery as next neighbor, of sleeping in heathen temples, of searching out the hidden treasures of the earth and of being called in by Uncle Sam to take charge of providing essential materials for the manufacture of munitions that won the world war have been experienced by Dr. H. Foster Bain, the new chief of the bureau of mines.

He comes to his job experienced as an executive and as a practical miner in this country and all over the world. He knows something of how the other governments are handling their business. He has spent most of the last six years in mine exploration in Africa and the far eastern countries, from Siberia down into India. During the war he was assistant director of the bureau of mines, in particular charge of the raw materials needed for war munitions.

This time last year he was in China, and out in the interior where the travel was by pack trains. They slept in the temples and so got such an intimate acquaintance with the heathen gods that he doesn't think much of their housekeeping. Once they were so far out in the wilderness that they slept in the open, and the best camping place was in a graveyard because there were grass and trees. Again, they were getting into a town and couldn't find a temple to sleep in, so they set up their army cots at a wide place in the road. When they started to get up in the morning they found the people gathered from far and near to witness the ceremony.

He crossed the Yangtse way up in the interior where it flows in a canyon like that of the Grand Canyon in Colorado. He descended in one day from 10,500 feet above sea level to the river at 2,500 feet, and climbed on the other side next day to 10,000 feet. That night he was tired enough to sleep.

When in Central Africa he visited a Missouri mining engineer making copper in a smelter for some Belgians, using natives for the labor, most of whom had not seen a white man five years before, and where the country was so wild that they heard the lions roar regularly at night. One night the lions showed their contempt for the local authorities by coming into town and carrying off a policeman who had gone to sleep on the steps of the commandant of police.

Around the mines it was so civilized that Dr. Bain went to afternoon tea parties and tennis matches, traveling by automobile, and had elaborate and well served dinners at the local club. That sharp contrast between civilization and savagery, Dr. Bain says, grows to be an old story in the life of the mining engineer.

* * * *

Representative Richard N. Elliott of Indiana—President Harding and his other many friends call him "Dick"—boasts that his district is the only one represented in Congress that has a nickname—"The Old Burnt District"—and that it harbors more singing Quakers than any other community in the entire United States. It also is famous for Fountain City, the principal station of the underground railroad of civil war days. The house in which Eliza, heroine of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," took refuge is still standing, Representative Elliott says.

There are two stories as to why the Elliott district got its nickname—one that after a spirited election a big bonfire was started into which the victors threw the plug hats of their adversaries; the other that in the early days, when the votes in a national election were being canvassed in Philadelphia, the returns from this district were late owing to poor traveling facilities and the fact that there had been serious forest fires—then some one said, "Wait till the Old Burnt District is heard from."

* * * *

Some one is always starting some reform at the Capitol which causes a lot of bother, then some small change in procedure—and then things go on again just about as before. Here's an illustration: For some twenty years the clerk of the House, under a requisition, has been getting printed copies of a neat vest-pocket Congressional Directory, which carries the rules of procedure in the House. This usually comes out about a month before the big Congressional directory in which are the biographies of the members. This session the vest pocket directories have not been forthcoming, and the members who have learned to depend upon them have been asking "Why?" They are especially desirable this session, because they would be of the utmost value to the unprecedentedly large number of new members. It has been ascertained that while the copy went forward promptly as usual to the government printing office the publication has been suspended by direction of the joint committee on printing—as an economy. Now a concurrent resolution has been put through and about 5,000 of those vest pocket directory rule books will be printed. The only change made is that they are to be prepared, published and distributed by the